

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

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R 110935Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7666

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 12192

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TO TEXTS NBRD PARA FOUR VICE FIVE)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, VS, CV, ENRG

SUBJECT: GVN-GKR OIL DRILLING DISPUTE

REFS: A. SAIGON 11778

B. SINGAPORE 3684

1. CHARGE DISCUSSED LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN GVN-GKR OIL DRILLING DISPUTE WITH ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER HOU HONG EVENING SEPTEMBER 10 AND MORNING SEPTEMBER 11. CHARGE PASSED ON VERY HELPFUL INFORMATION CONTAINED PARA 1 REF A, AS WELL AS SOME OF INFORMATION IN REF B, WHICH WAS EQUALLY HELPFUL.

2. HOU HONG SAID THAT ON SEPTEMBER 10 THE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION HAD ISSUED A STATEMENT OR COMMUNIQUE SEVERELY CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS ALLEGED FAILURE TO UPHOLD THE NATIONAL HONOR THROUGH NOT TAKING VIGOROUS
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ENOUGH ACTION AGAINST THE GVN. HOU HONG MET PRIVATELY

WITH A REPRESENTATIVE GROUP OF KHMER EDITORS AND REPORTERS ON A BACKGROUND BASIS AFTERNOON OF SEPTEMBER 10 IN AN EFFORT TO GET THEM TO CEASE PUBLISHING INFLAMMATORY ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS AND TO STOP CIRCULATING FALSE RUMORS ABOUT THIS AFFAIR. HE TOLD THE PRESS THE GKR CONSIDERED THAT ITS DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES WITH THE GVN OUGHT TO BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL AND FOR THAT REASON HAD NOT PUBLISHED ITS NOTES TO THE GVN. HOU HONG BRIEFED THE PRESS PEOPLE ON THE CONTENTS OF THE NOTES. HE ALSO LABELLED AS FALSE RUMORS THAT THE GVN NAVY HAD MOVED INTO THE AREA OF THE DRILLING PLATFORM, THAT THERE HAD BEEN A NAVAL ENGAGEMENT WITH A THAI FISHING BOAT IN THE GULF, AND THAT THE DRILLING RIG HAD BEEN ATTACKED. HE EXPLAINED IN ADDITION THAT THERE WAS NO DISPUTE OVER THE SOVEREIGNTY OF POULO WEI ISLAND BUT ONLY OVER THE BOUNDARY OF THE TERRITORIAL SEA IN THE AREA WHERE THE RIG IS WORKING. HOU HONG SAID THAT THE PRESS APPEARED TO BE SATISFIED WITH HIS EXPLANATIONS BUT ANY EFFECT ON WHAT IS BEING PUBLISHED IN PHNOM PENH WOULD NOT APPEAR UNTIL TOMORROW, SEPTEMBER 12, BECAUSE TODAY'S PAPERS HAD ALREADY GONE TO PRESS PRIOR TO HIS MEETING WITH THE JOURNALISTS YESTERDAY.

3. MARSHAL LON NOL HAD A MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 9 WITH SOME OF THE GKR'S MILITARY LEADERS. APPARENTLY AS AN OUTGROWTH OF THAT MEETING THE KAF COMMANDER, BRIGADIER GENERAL EA CHHONG, AND THE MNK COMMANDER, COMMODORE VONG SARENDY, WENT TO REAM TO LOOK INTO MILITARY PREPARATIONS THERE FOR A POSSIBLE MILITARY CONFRONTATION IN THE GULF WITH THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE. WE ALSO LEARNED THAT THE KAF YESTERDAY CRANKED UP A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR T-28 PILOTS IN AERIAL COMBAT, AND STEPS WERE TAKEN TO REINFORCE THE KAF AIR BASE AT REAM. CHIEF MEDTC RAISED THESE DEVELOPMENTS WITH VONG SARENDY AND EA CHHONG IN AN EFFORT TO CALM THEM DOWN. GENERAL PALMER TOLD THEM IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS THAT THEY SHOULD NOT ENGAGE IN ANY FACE-SAVING MILITARY PREPARATIONS, WHOSE EFFECT WOULD ONLY BE TO DETRACT FROM THE WAR EFFORT.

4. COMMENT: THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE KHMER, CIVILIAN
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AS WELL AS MILITARY, WOULD MUCH PREFER TO MIX IT UP WITH THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE THAN TO ENGAGE IN THEIR NORMAL ACTIVITY OF FIGHTING AGAINST THE KHMER ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LINES. WE HAVE BEEN DOING OUR BEST THROUGH A NUMBER OF CHANNELS TO CALM EMOTIONS HERE AND TO COUNSEL AGAINST THE SUBSTITUTION OF MILITARY PREPARATIONS FOR DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES. WE APPRECIATE EMBASSY SAIGON'S EFFORTS TO COUNSEL MODERATION ON THE

GVN SIDE, EFFORTS WHICH WE HAVE NOT MENTIONED TO ANYONE HERE. UNFORTUNATELY IT WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE FOR US TO ADVISE THE GKR TO ACCEDE TO THE GVN ULTIMATUM, WHICH IS WHAT THEY FEEL THEY WOULD BE DOING IF THEY COMPLIED WITH THE DEMAND THAT THE RIG BE REMOVED FROM THE DISPUTED AREA BY SEPTEMBER 12.
KEELEY

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